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28 April 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
THROUGH : Deputy Director (Intelligence)
SUBJECT : Purported VC Installations at Chantrea

1. This memorandum is an evaluation of a reported major Viet Cong military area on the Cambodia-South Vietnam border near Chantrea. The reported installation covers a nine square kilometer area and consists of nine separate encampments or concentrations. NPIC has made a comparative study of the photography of four recent missions and has concluded:

a. That the area is primarily agricultural, is typical of other agricultural areas established throughout this lowland section; and is under active cultivation;

b. That trenching and possible weapons emplacements, indicating former military activity, are now mostly overgrown and show no evidence of any vehicle movement;

c. That six of the nine separate installations are in South Vietnam, one is in Cambodia, and two are on the border;

d. That there is no evidence of any military activity; and

e. That while Viet Cong forces may be using this area, it is not possible to confirm this from the photography.

2. NPIC's conclusions, and the lack of any other confirming evidence of the presence of a Viet Cong military installation, leave us essentially with the same situation as previously. We suspect that the Viet

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Cong are in this area; extensive and repeated photographic search of the area has disclosed a number of installations which may belong to Viet Cong forces. The photography, however, can neither confirm that these are Viet Cong installations nor show what military use is being made of them.

Background

3. The "Duck's Beak" sector of the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border for years has been particularly suspect as a Viet Cong safehaven and staging area. Viet Cong elements have crossed into this area of Cambodia on several occasions since 1961 when hard pressed by South Vietnamese security forces. Frequent border incidents have occurred in this general area as a result of hot pursuit and security sweeps or airstrikes conducted by South Vietnam.

4. The most recent large-scale incident was the 19 March action at Chantrea, which developed when a South Vietnamese security force flushed a company of Viet Cong at the border in Kien Tuong Province and then pursued it into Cambodia. Chantrea is approximately five miles northwest of the suspect area under present discussion.

5. The temporary use of Cambodian border areas by the Viet Cong as a safehaven has been admitted on several occasions by the Cambodian government. Phnom Penh has from time to time publicly announced that its armed forces or security guards have encountered armed bands of "foreigners." On 7 September 1961 Cambodia announced the capture of a 100-man band, and quoted one member as admitting being a "captain of the Viet Cong," who had been carrying on "combat exercises on our territory since 31 August." The destruction of the Viet Cong encampment of about 50 shelters was also reported. Earlier this year the government sentenced a small group of Viet Cong to a year in prison for violating the border.

6. The presence of any large scale, permanent Viet Cong installation on Cambodian territory has never been proven despite frequent South Vietnamese government allegations that bases and training areas exist in Cambodia with Phnom Penh's collusion. Past

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aerial photographs of the border area have also shown a number of suspicious installations, although some of these were subsequently identified by ARVN J-2 as inside Vietnam. In 1961 the US chief of MAAG in Cambodia was shown several map locations, apparently corresponding to suspected sites shown on oblique photographs of Cambodian territory. He identified these locations as Cambodian Army installations he had recently visited.

7. The most publicized charges of permanent Viet Cong installations on Cambodian soil were published in November 1961 in the New York Times by Robert Trumbull, and were based on documents shown him by South Vietnamese government officials. Trumbull was subsequently invited by Cambodia to inspect the areas cited with Cambodian authorities. He later publicly retracted his first article, stating he found no evidence to support South Vietnam's charges. Privately, he told US officials in Phnom Penh he had been duped by Vietnamese intelligence.

8. Subsequent efforts by US officials to substantiate extensive Viet Cong use of Cambodian territory similarly uncovered no hard evidence. In photo reconnaissance of a 7-kilometer wide strip of the "Duck's Beak" suggested the presence of fox-holes and gun emplacements on the Cambodian side of the frontier, predominately within a 5-kilometer radius of the extreme southern tip. Subsequent low altitude reconnaissance of this area identified numerous man-made holes and trenches, apparently used as irrigation sink holes, although some were considered of possible military value. Trenches were visible in and around villages, but no weapons were seen. Ruins of gun emplacements and blockhouses have existed on both sides of the border since the Indochina war.

9. Although the presence of well-camouflaged Viet Cong installations on the Cambodian side of the border cannot be firmly ruled out, the Cambodian government's past record suggests it has no knowledge of any such installations. In May 1961, Cambodia's Foreign Minister proposed increasing the number of ICC personnel and establishing fixed points along

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its borders. Since that time Cambodia has repeated on numerous occasions--and again only just recently--its willingness to permit international inspection of border areas.

R. J. SMITH
Assistant Director
Current Intelligence

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MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF SPECIAL GROUP

1. Attached for your information are a CIA memorandum and an NPIC study of the photography of areas along the Cambodia-South Vietnam border near Chantrea. You will recall the discussion of this subject at last week's Special Group meeting.

2. The CIA memorandum has the concurrence of DIA analysts.

Marshall S. Carter
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Director

Attachments

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NPIC/R-1184/64

April 1964

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION REPORT

EVALUATION OF REPORTED MILITARY ACTIVITY, CHANTREA AREA, CAMBODIA

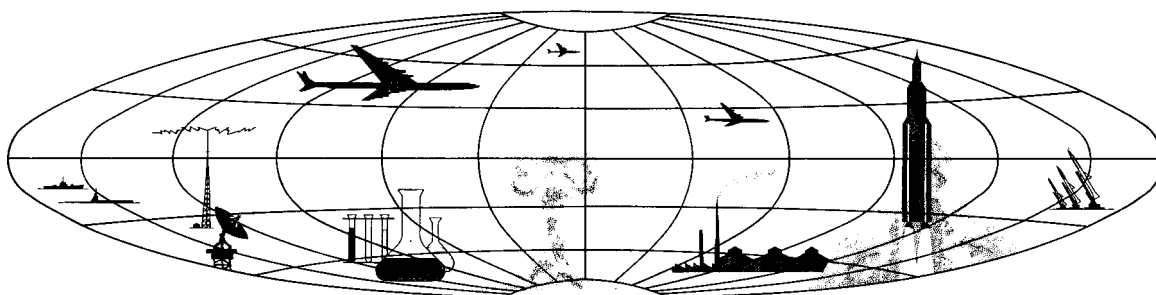


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NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION CENTER



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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

WARNING

This document contains information affecting the national defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, sections 793 and 794, of the U.S. Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION REPORT

EVALUATION OF
REPORTED MILITARY ACTIVITY,
CHANTREA AREA, CAMBODIA

NPIC/R-1184/64

April 1964

NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION CENTER

NPIC/R-1184/64

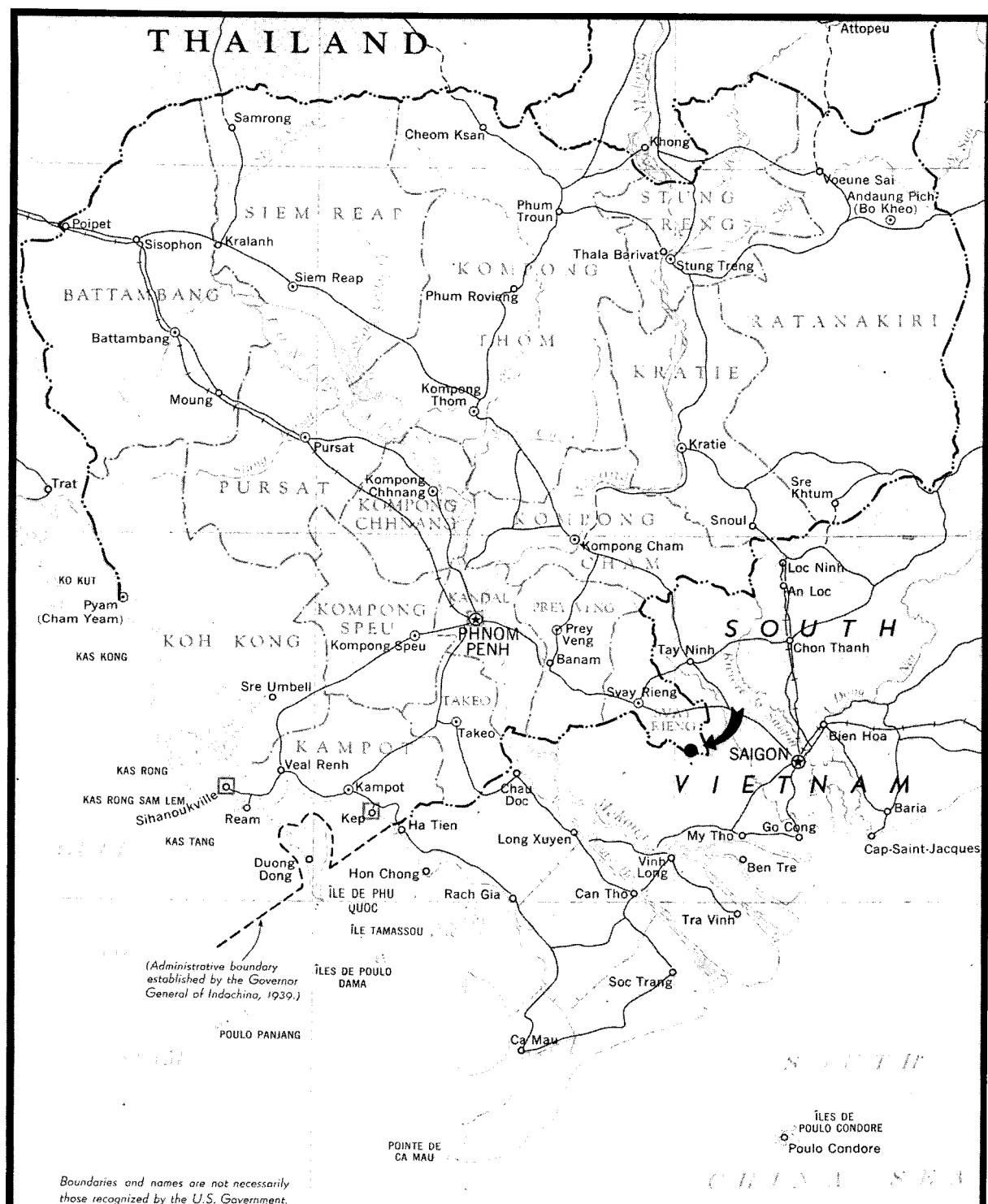


FIGURE 1. LOCATION MAP.

SUMMARY

This report, prepared at the request of the Department of State, represents an NPIC evaluation of a reported military area in Cambodia, adjacent to the South Vietnam border and in the vicinity of UTM coordinates XS290947 1/. A location map is provided in Figure 1. The area, located 5 nm SSE of Chantrea, Cambodia (10-52N 106-04E), is generally flat, marshy land, and is predominantly agricultural.

All coordinates and the border delineation have been derived from AMS Series L509, sheet NC 48-7, scale: 1:250,000.

The 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron (RTS) report referenced above refers to nine possible installations. Each of these is commented on in the body of this report.

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION

1. Area 1 (See Figure 2), reported as a probable command post/headquarters 1/, is a major local farming development as evidenced by a pattern of continued cultivation during the period of photographic coverage [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The referenced report lists one possible bunker located in the center of the area, 3 revetted storage buildings, 2 possible storage areas containing a total of 3 buildings and 2 support buildings, a barrier of approximately 35 foxholes, approximately 15 AW emplacements, a sawtooth trench and numerous dispersed foxholes.

A comparison of this area with [REDACTED] and LUCKY DRAGON [REDACTED] reveals the following: The reported bunker contained a dwelling which has been removed on photography of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The reported revetted storage buildings appear to be farm buildings and outbuildings. The purpose of the approximately 35 irregularly spaced and aligned excavations, reported as a barrier of 35 foxholes, has not been determined; however, they may be used in planting trees for a windbreak. Trees planted in these holes would form a barrier against the prevailing summer monsoon winds, a windbreak pattern common in the delta area. A search of the surrounding

area shows that those areas of established local farming development have this windbreak pattern. Similar orderly rows of holes can be observed in several of the areas depicted in the referenced report. The sawtooth trench appears to be partially obscured by vegetation. The vegetation and the absence of track activity in the vicinity indicate that the trench is probably little used.

2. Area 2 (See Figure 3) was reported as a possible munitions storage area containing 10 dispersed storage bunkers interconnected by a canal system. A central probable control point comprises 2 main buildings, several support buildings, 14 AW emplacements, 2 sawtooth trenches (one forming a triangle) and numerous scattered foxholes.

A comparison of this area with [REDACTED] and LUCKY DRAGON Mission [REDACTED] reveals the following: The area is a probable former agricultural area containing 10 raised building foundations (buildings have been removed) interconnected by raised paths and 4 buildings which were formerly associated with the agricultural activity in this area. The sawtooth trenches are almost obliterated by vegetation on photography of [REDACTED] and appear to be no longer used.

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The entire area is typical of the agricultural development observed throughout this marshy area.

3. Area 3 (See Figure 4) reported as a possible munitions storage area is an abandoned agricultural area almost totally obscured by vegetation.

4. Area 4 was reported as an unidentified storage area containing 5 possible storage buildings interconnected by canals, 2 distinct lines of foxholes, and numerous scattered foxholes and AW emplacements. The report also suggests this installation may house additional headquarters and command facilities.

A comparison of this area with Mission [REDACTED] LUCKY DRAGON Mission [REDACTED], and stereoscopic observation of [REDACTED] reveals the following: The two distinct lines of foxholes appear to be small circular cleared areas with a shrub-like object projecting up from the center. The alignment, spacing and orientation resemble that of a windbreak. The building pattern, raised foundations and paths, and cultivation pattern are similar to those observed in the other agricultural areas. The numerous scattered holes generally observed in the area appear similar to the scattered holes observed throughout other agricultural areas. Absence of

track activity in the vicinity indicates that these holes are probably not used.

5. Area 5 (See Figure 5) was reported as a probable training area containing a simulated outpost and hamlet, numerous scattered foxholes and several AW emplacements.

A comparison of this area with [REDACTED] LUCKY DRAGON Mission [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] reveals the following: On Missions [REDACTED] ground scarring was observed. On Mission [REDACTED] buildings were observed erected on the scarred areas and connected by paths similar to those observed in the other areas.

Also observed adjacent to Area 5 but not included in the annotated area on the 13th RTS report is the outline of a triangular strongpoint and possibly associated quarters area. Lack of track activity indicates the area is probably abandoned. No evidence of training activity was noted.

6. Areas 6, 7, 8 and 9 (See Figure 6) were reported as possible storage areas and unidentified installations. A comparison of these areas with [REDACTED] LUCKY DRAGON [REDACTED] and Mission [REDACTED] reveals the typical, active agricultural pattern found throughout this low section of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions have been derived from an examination of generally poor quality photography (with the exception of [REDACTED]) currently available at NPIC:

- a. The area is primarily agricultural and is typical of other agricultural areas established throughout this lowland section.
- b. Trenching and possible weapons emplacements indicate former military

activity in the area; however, growth of vegetation and lack of track activity indicate that the trenches and possible emplacements are currently in disuse.

- c. The area may be used by para-military or military forces such as the Viet Cong, but such military uses of this area cannot be confirmed from an examination of photography currently available at the NPIC.

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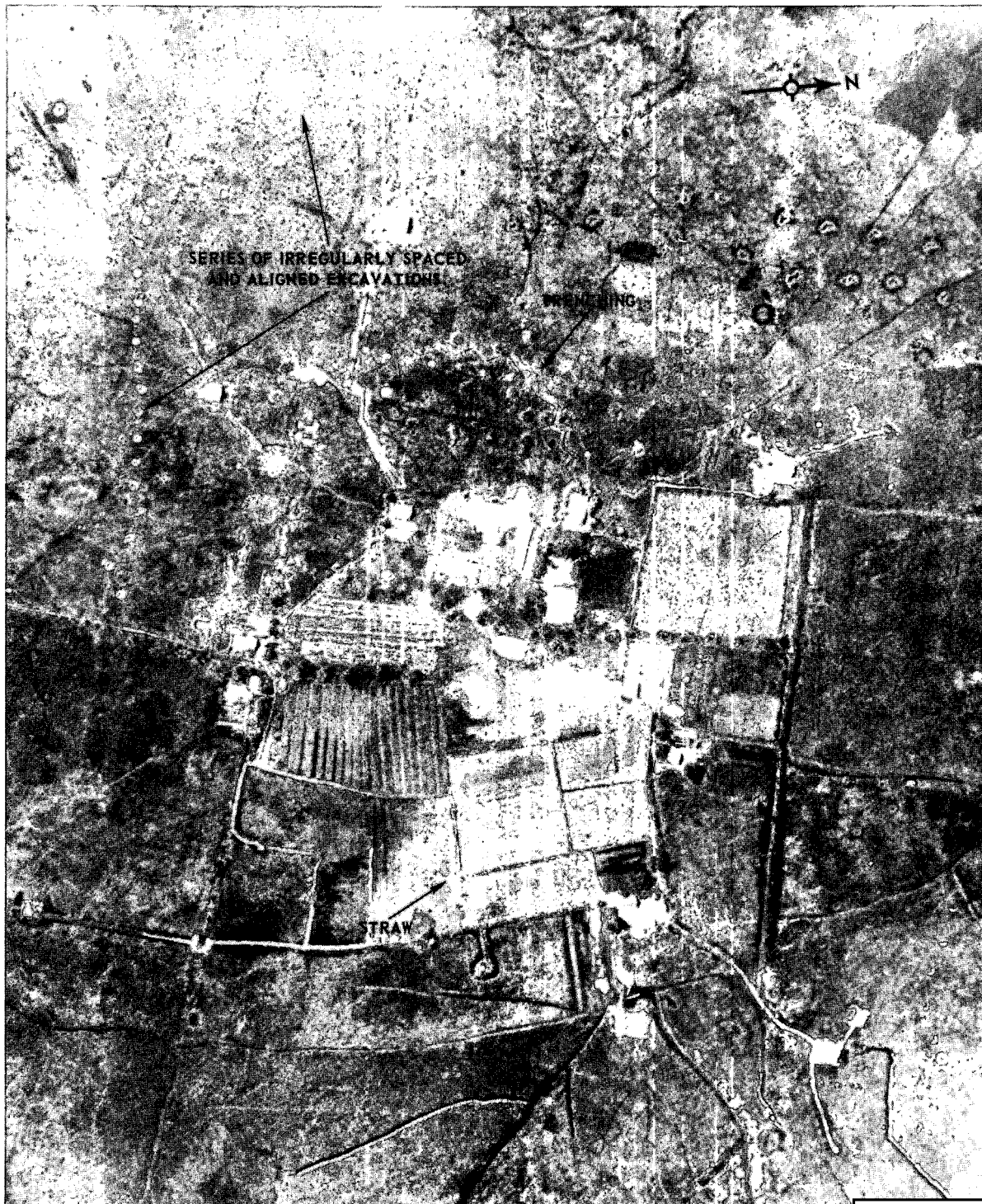


FIGURE 2. FARMING, TRENCHING AND UNIDENTIFIED ACTIVITY.

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FIGURE 3. PARTIALLY RAZED AGRICULTURAL AREA.

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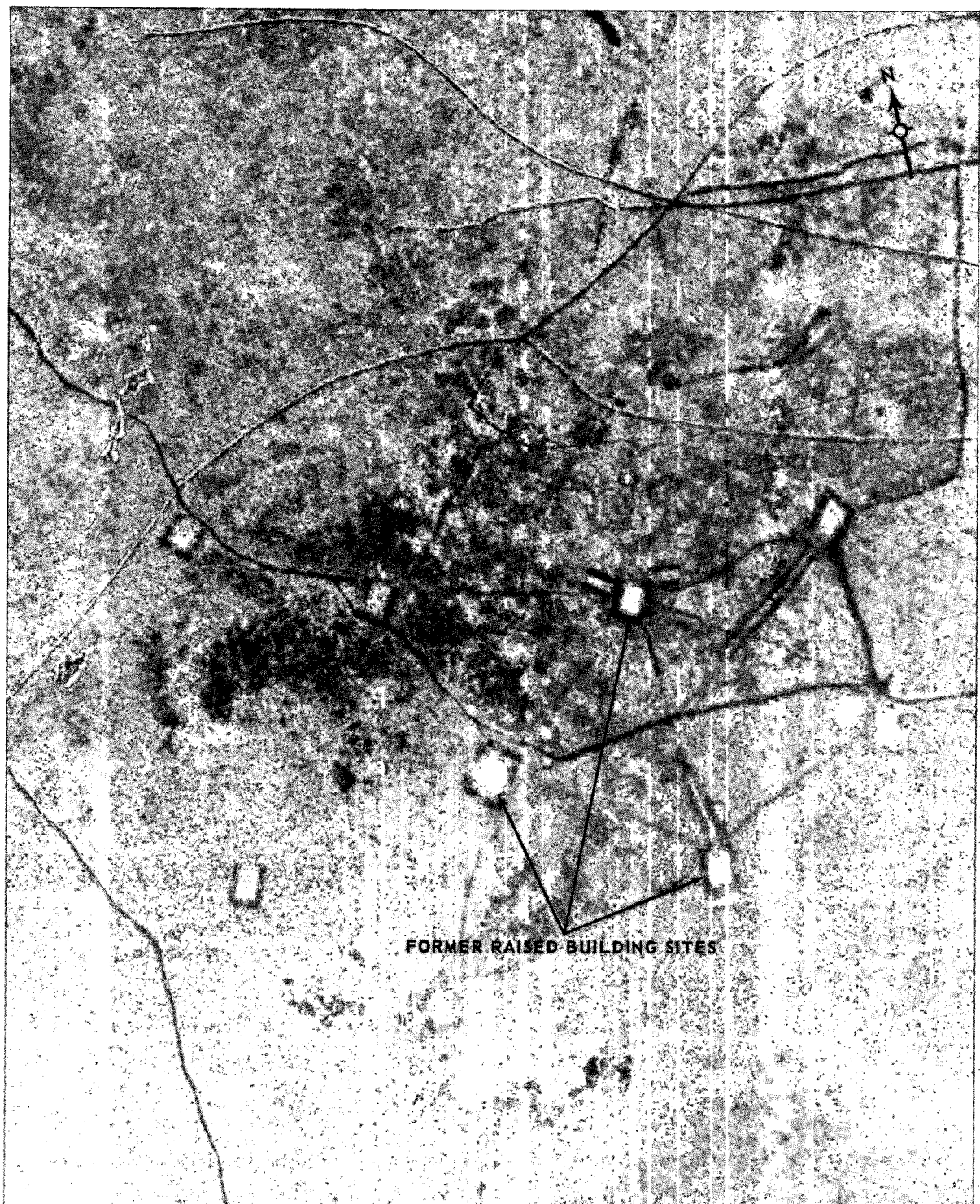


FIGURE 4. ABANDONED AGRICULTURAL AREA.

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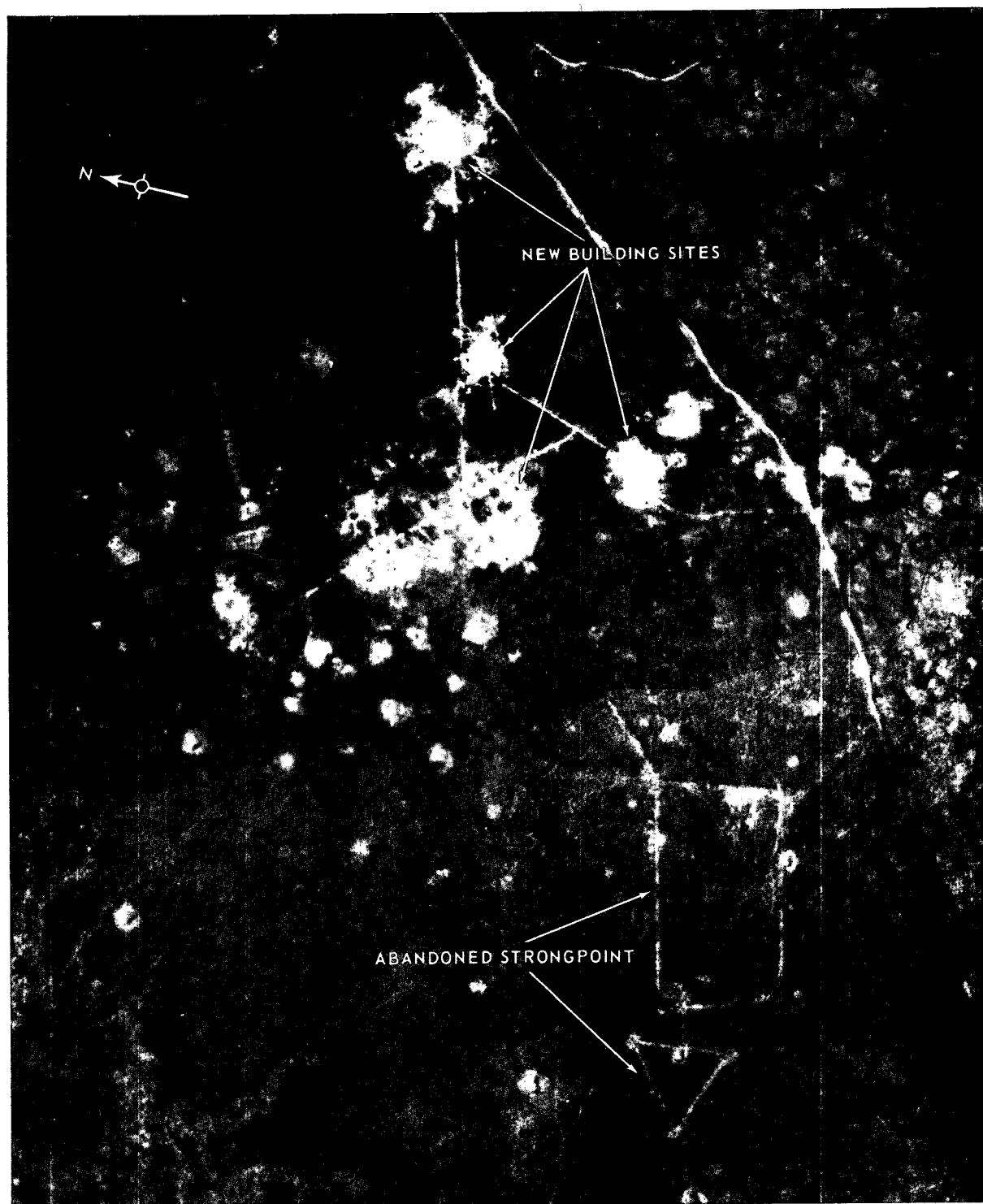


FIGURE 5. ABANDONED STRONGPOINT AND RURAL DWELLINGS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

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FIGURE 6. TYPICAL ACTIVE AGRICULTURAL AREA.

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REFERENCES



MAPS

AMS Series L509, sheet NC 48-7, scale: 1:250,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

AMS Series L605, sheets 220E, 220W, 229E, 229W, edition 6-SG1F, scale: 1:100,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

DOCUMENTS

1. 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, APO 143, San Francisco, California, *Detailed Photo Interpretation Report*, 4 Mar 64 (CONFIDENTIAL)

REQUIREMENT

STATE-64

NPIC PROJECT

N-493/64